

Sept

20

THE

HARP.

A LEGENDARY TALE.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

From the Author.

Hector Macneil

THE
HARP.

A
LEGENDARY TALE.

IN
TWO PARTS.

Smeirg a loifgeadh a thiompan ria!

EDINBURGH:

AT THE Apollo Press BY MARTIN AND M^CDOWALL.
PRINTED FOR P. HILL, PARLIAMENT SQUARE, EDINBURGH;
AND
J. JOHNSTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

Anno 1789.

HARP

TWO PARTS

EDINBURGH

TO THE
PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT,
AND
OTHER MEMBERS,
OF THE
GAELIC SOCIETY OF LONDON;

THE
FOLLOWING POEM

IS
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY
THEIR MOST OBEDIENT, AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

HECTOR MACNEILL.

THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT

AND

OTHER MEMBERS

OF THE SOCIETY OF LONDON

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT

OF THE ARTS AND MANUFACTURES

AND THE PROMOTION OF THE INTERESTS OF THE ARTS AND MANUFACTURES

TO THE READER.

THE writer of the present Poem, thinks it necessary to acquaint the Public, that it is founded on a short traditionary story, which reached him by the following accidental circumstance. A gentleman in Stirlingshire, well known for his researches into antiquity and national character, chancing while on a tour to the Hebrides, to hear some person say, "*I'll never burn my Harp for a Woman,*" took occasion to ask the meaning of the proverb.—He received for answer, a simple unadorned tale, somewhat similar to the ground work of the present Poem; the singularity of which, struck him so forcibly, that, he committed it to writing. On a visit, some years ago, to a friend who had accidentally seen the manuscript, he related this little artless story to the author, and, with his usual glow of colouring, diffused such an air of Novelty and Passion over it, as to suggest an idea, that something interesting might be made of it in verse. The *first* part was written shortly after, but the author's sudden departure from Europe, put a stop for some time to any further attempt; although he must confess, inclination repeatedly disposed him to finish what he had begun. A tedious passage home, furnished him with ample opportunities to gratify this propensity—his residence in Britain since his arrival, has enabled him to receive the opinion of his friends, and to avail himself of their strictures.

HAVING given this short account of his HARP, the author now presents it to the world, with that mixture of hope and diffidence, which the partiality of friends, and the uncertainty of public approbation, naturally excite. Of its merits he shall say nothing. In an age, and in a country, however, so highly cultivated as the present, one observation may not be improper. Should the Poem in some instances appear too irregular and abrupt in its construction, the author begs it may not be

imputed to inadvertency, but design. His aim was to render his tale rather interesting than regular, and animated rather than correct. — Nature and Passion indeed, were his chief objects; and as these can never derive such energy from Descriptive as from *Dramatic* composition, it is almost unnecessary for him to observe, that the ANCIENT BALLAD has been his model.

WITH regard to the DEDICATION, the author has only to say, that a sense of propriety induced him to inscribe the HARP to the GAELIC SOCIETY. As the scene lies in the Hebrides, and the actors are the inhabitants of these parts, he was naturally led to present a Highland traditionary Tale to those who are the particular patrons and encouragers of ancient *Poetry* and *Music* in the Highlands of Scotland; and while he is free to acknowledge, that he experienced pleasure in “stringing his HARP,” he is not ashamed to declare, that he now feels a satisfaction in leaving this testimony of his respect for a description of men, whose conduct certainly lays claim to the approbation of their Country.

“Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctorum

“Ducit, et in memores non finit esse sui.”

OVID.

EDINBURGH, 15th APRIL, 1789.

THE
HARP.
A LEGENDARY TALE.

IN TWO PARTS

PART FIRST.

I.

STILL'D is the Tempest's blust'ring roar;
Hoarse dash the billows of the sea;—
But who on KILDA's dismal shore
Cries—"Have I burnt my HARP for thee!"

II.

'Tis COL, wild raving to the gale
That howls to heath, and blasted tree;
Still as he eyes the lessening fail,
Cries—"Have I burnt my HARP for thee!"

A.

III.

Bright was thy fame in BARA's isle,
Sweet Bard! where many a rival sung;
Oft had'st thou wak'd the tear and smile
As soft thy Harp melodious rung:

IV.

Oft had'st thou touch'd the female heart,
(To LOVE I ween! and PITY true.)
Till MORA came to hear thy art;—
MORA, with eye of softening blue.

V.

The maid he priz'd above the throng
That prest to hear his raptur'd strain;—
'The maid, who melted at the song,
But trifled with a lover's pain:

VI.

Long had he bore the treach'rous smile
That cherish'd Hope, and left Despair;
The promis'd Blifs, which female guile
As oft dispers'd in empty air;

VII.

Till fhun'd by ev'ry constant maid;
Condemn'd by Friends; by Kindred prest;
Deceitful thus, in smiles array'd,
MORA the forrowing youth addrest.

VIII.

" Too long, O COL! in plaintive moan
" Thou'lt strung thy HARP to strains divine;—
" Add but two strings of varied tone
" This heart,—this yielding heart is thine."

IX.

Two strings the youth with anxious care,
Half doubtful to his Harp applies;
And oft in vain, he turns each air,
And oft each varying note he tries;

X.

At length, (unrival'd in his art!)
With new-born sounds the valley rings;
COL claims his MORA's promis'd heart,
As deep he strikes the varied strings!

XL

Three moons;—three honied moons are past,
Since COL enraptur'd laugh'd at care;
And oft the tuneful HARP he blest
That won a nymph so good and fair;

XII.

Till mindful of those tender ties
Which FASHION's sons would blush to name;
With soften'd voice, and melting sighs,
He thus accosts his peerless dame.

XIII.

" Three months, dear partner of my bliss!
" Three fleeting months have fled their charms,
" Since first I snatch'd the bridal kifs,
" And clasp'd perfection to my arms:

XIV.

" Yet Happiness, however true,
" Must fade if selfish or confin'd;—
" Your friends now claim affections due;
" The kindred transports of the mind!

XV.

" Each parent mourns our long delay;
" They think of MORA with a tear:
" The gale invites—at early day
" To CANA's sea-beat shore we steer."

XVI.

The morn blush'd fair; mild blew the gale;
The lark to heaven light warbling springs;
COL smiles with love; spreads quick the sail;
And sweeps with ravis'd heart the strings!

XVII.

But ah! how short the transient gleams
That light with joy the human breast!—
The Tempest raves, and wildly screams
Each frightened sea fowl to her nest.

XVIII.

High rose the billows of the deep,
That lately roll'd serenely mild;
And dash'd near KILDA's awful steep;
COL clasps his Love with horror wild.

XIX.

For cold's the form o'er which he hung
With raptur'd eye the morn before;
And mute, and tuneless is the tongue
That charm'd so late on BARA's shore;

XX.

And pale and lifeless is the cheek
That glow'd so late with rosy hue;
The eye that melting joys could speak
Is clos'd!—the eye of soft'ning blue.

XXI.

Oft, oft her breathless lips of clay
With frantic cries he fondly prest;
And while a senseless corse she lay,
He strain'd her madly to his breast.—

XXII.

But who can paint with pencil true
The scene, when sighs first struggling stole
(Which thus by magic LOVE he drew)
Deep lab'ring from her flutt'ring soul!

XXIII.

"She breathes!"—she lives! the Husband cried,

"Life's not yet fled this beauteous form!—"

"Protecting Heaven! some aid provide!—"

"Shield—shield my trembler from the storm!"

XXIV.

Hard with the furious surge he strove,

His LOVE and fav'rite HARP to save;

Till deep in CRONA's sea-warm cove,

He bears them safe from storm and wave.

XXV.

But Cove, nor Love's assiduous care

Could ebbing Life's warm tide restore!—

Pale, wet, and speechless lay the fair

By KILDA's bleak and stormy shore.

XXVI.

"No roof its friendly smoke displays!—"

"No storm-scap'd plank, nor turf, nor tree!—"

"No shrub to yeild one kindly blaze,

"And warm my Love to life and me!"

XXVII.

"Dark grows the night! — and cold and sharp
"Beat wind, and hail, and drenching rain! —
"Nought else remains — *I'll burn my HARP!*"
He cries, and breaks his Harp in twain.

XXVIII.

"For thee, O MORA! oft it rung,
"To guard thee from each rival's art;
"And now, though broken and unstrung,
"It guards from Death thy constant heart."

XXIX.

Bright flam'd the fragments as he spoke;
One parting sigh his HARP he gave;
The storm-drench'd faggots blaze through smoke,
And snatch his MORA from the grave.

THE
HARP.
A LEGENDARY TALE.

IN TWO PARTS

PART SECOND.

I.

Now heedless rav'd the stormy night,
For instant Terror frown'd no more,
And cheerful blaz'd the spreading light
Round KILDA's dark and dismal shore;

II.

And cheerful smil'd the grateful pair,
And talk'd of Death and Dangers past,
When loud the voice of wild despair
Came rushing on the midnight blast.

C

III.

Cold horror seiz'd each Lover's heart. —

" Ah me! what dismal sounds draw near!

" Defend us Heaven!" with sudden start

Cried MORA, thrill'd with frantic fear.

IV.

One hand supports his trembling Wife,

The other snatch'd his trusty glave;

" My HARP he cries, has given thee life,

" And this, that precious life shall save!"

V.

" No danger comes," deep sigh'd a form,

As near the ~~Cave~~ it shiv'ring stood;

" A Stranger shipwreck'd by the Storm

" Implores the gen'rous and the good;

VI.

" No danger comes—ah me! forlorn!

" A wretch by Woes and Tempests tost! —

" From Love—from Friends, and Kindred torn,

" And dash'd on KILDA's frightful coast!"

VII.

- " Restless with grief, at op'ning day
" For LEWIS isle I spread the sail;
" Sweet rose the lark with cheerful lay!
" And sweetly blew the flatt'ring gale!

VIII.

- " Ah FATE relentless! thus to cheat
" With baneful lure and treach'rous smile!—
" Were human suff'rings not complete
" Till wreck'd on KILDA's desert isle!"

IX.

- " Lur'd by the light that gleams afar,
" With fainting steps these cliffs I prest:—
" O! may it prove a Polar star,
" To guide to PITY's shelt'ring breast!"

X.

- Quick from his grasp the falchion flies,
As COL each opening arm extends;
" Approach, ill fated youth!" he cries,
" Here—here are none but suff'ring friends!"

XI.

" Like thee, we hail'd the matin song,
" The flatt'ring gale, and faithless tide!
" How sweet! by zephyrs borne along,
" My HARP and MORA by my fide!"

XII.

" Why starts the youth?—approach—draw near.—
" Behold the wreck of storm and wave.—
" 'Tis all that's left!—my HARP so dear
" I burnt, that Fair one's life to save!"

XIII.

First pale, then crimson grew his cheek,
And sorely shook his manly frame!—
His fault'ring tongue refus'd to speak,
Save to repeat his MORA's name.

XIV.

A name, which oft had charm'd his ear,
And e'en from childhood grew more sweet;
A name, which *Love* had rendered dear
And *Sorrow* taught him to repeat!

XV.

Long had he nurs'd the kindling flame,
Long, long possess'd her virgin heart;
But party feuds and discord came,
And forc'd the tend'rest pair to part.

XVI.

Torn hapless thus from all he lov'd,
The wretched Wand'rer left his home;
From isle to isle incessant rov'd;—
His only wish—to idly roam!

XVII.

Oft had he brav'd the Tempest's war,
Unaided in his slender bark;
Oft lonely steer'd by some faint star
That glimmer'd thro' th' involving dark;

XVIII.

Oft, oft uncertain whither driven,
Or near some rock, or breaker borne;
He'd quit his helm to guiding heaven,
And figh his cheerless lot till morn.

XXVII.

O most ungrateful of thy kind!
 And most unjust to *Love* and *Me!* —
 O WOMAN! WOMAN! light as wind,
 I'll ne'er burn HARP again for thee!

THE END.